1549

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."
JOHN HAY.

On Picket Duty.

Business and other correspondents whose letters still remain unanswered will do me a great favor by granting me indulgence for my tardiness. There is an immense pile of letters on my desk waiting attention, and I am doing the best I can to reduce it. The consideration which the writers have shown, in almost every instance, by refraining from complaint, is deeply appreciated.

The view of Wagner taken by Maurice Barrès, one of the most thoroughgoing Egoists, is interesting not only in itself, but by contrast with the view of another Egoist, Nietsche. The latter, who was at one time a great admirer of Wagner, afterward began a very fierce campaign against him, opposing him, as I understand, because of the religious character of his music-dramas and the doctrine of self-sacrifice therein taught. Barrès, on the other hand, as may be seen in the article from his pen which I translate for the present issue of Liberty, regards Wagner as the highest type of Egoistic Individualism and considers his doctrine of renunciation as meaning simply the abandonment of the less to secure the greater and solely for the purpose of satisfying self.

If a few of Liberty's subscribers would follow the example of Mr. A. Hœnisch of Oakland, Cal., the book subscription fund would speedily reach the desired figure of 500 copies and pass far beyond it. The fruits of his work may be seen in the acknowledgments in another column. Of the ten single-copy subscriptions which he sends me from Oakland his own is the only one coming from a subscriber to Liberty. Such work as this is of the best. However, the list is growing steadily, and I see no reason why in time it should not reach the figure of 500, as it already amounts to more than 350. But I anticipate that it will take a much longer time to secure the 150 still lacking than has been required to secure the 250 subscribed since Dr. de Lespinasse started with his subscription of 100. Therefore, since it will take a considerable time to prepare the book itself, it behooves all those who desire its speedy publication to send in their names without delay. There are undoubtedly very many readers of Liberty who intend to buy a copy of the book who refrain from giving me their names because they think single-copy subscriptions do not help materially. This is a great mistake. If all such persons would at once add their names to the list, the problem would be solved in a week. Perhaps I may here state that the book will be a very large one, considering the price. It will contain from 400 to 500 pages, each page having 400 to 500 words. If the quality proves satisfactory, there will be a good dollar's worth. It will also include as a frontispiece a portrait of the author, it having been suggested to him that this would meet the demand of many who have made unsuccessful application for his photograph, and it being less distasteful to him to so publish his portrait than to offer it for sale by itself.

The Scapegoat.

[Henry Maret in Le Radical.]

Some one, having observed that a father of eleven children did not wear flannels, uttered this aphorism:

"The abolition of flannel is a means of repopulation."

It is by placing itself in the same order of ideas that the League against the abuse of tobacco has just discovered that the aforesaid tobacco is the real cause of the depopulation of France as well as of our increasing immorality.

We smoke, and we have fewer children than in the past. This is very true. Only, the Germans smoke more than we do and have so many children that they don't know what to do with them. This must be due to a difference in the tobacco, and then the accusation falls upon the administration. It is evidently the government tobacco that causes sterility.

However that may be, our leaguers affirm that those of our provinces which smoke the least are at the same time those which produce the greatest number of legitimate children; for it seems that the other provinces make it up in natural children. This new observation throws a light into our heavy smokers' brains; consequently it is allowable to wonder that it has not struck the brains, indisputably less obtuse, of the wise enemies of the cigar.

Might we not think, in fact, that tobacco is as foreign to the event as flannel, and that, if it is the provinces where they indulge in revelry which smoke the most, it is not because they smoke that they have fewer children, but because they revel. How could this have escaped minds as sound as those which have the queer idea of founding leagues.

Nothing delights me so much as a league. From time to time a gentleman comes round and asks you for half a dollar; you give it, because it is not worth while not to give it, you don't know why; that is called a league.

Moreover, everything continues to go on as before.

The trouble is that the leagues multiply, and consequently the number of calls for half dollars; for this is not a simple coincidence, and, though it is true that tobacco is foreign to depopulation, as much cannot be said of the leagues, which are really the cause of the half dollars. I know people who are already beginning to refuse, and who declare their willingness to found in their turn a league against the abuse of leagues.

To come back to the league against tobacco, which would be one of the most comical if that against indecency did not exist, it pleases me to give it the benefit of my observations, which, while they may not equal its own, have none the less their value.

I observe that the young people of to-day smoke much less than we smoked at their age, and that the League does not pride itself upon the fact, since it is not due to its advice. It is due to the fact that they have never had the courage to face a sickness at the stomach and that they are very practical; now tobacco is a fancy which we can indulge only at a considerable cost. Unhappily there is something else that costs still more, — children. Gradually these too are becoming a luxury which modest ease cannot afford. That is the real reason why the births called legitimate diminish daily. If less caution is observed in regard to natural children, it is because the latter do not present the same inconvenience, since generally the care of bringing them up is abandoned to her who brought them into the world, which the law approves, as well as all virtuous people; how could one better manifest his repentance than by wishing never to hear of the fruits of his fault?

As for children born in wedlock, a beast of a law making them a burden on the husband, it is very necessary for the latter to resign himself to being a father. That is why he is circumspect.

Truly, to refuse to observe this sole reason for the decrease of births is to turn and turn around the pot without ever deciding to open it.

The Gold-Hunter.

["Lundi" in L'Echo de Paris.]

Harpagonnet had in his purse two gold coins stolen from his father. Frequently he fumbled in his pocket and felt of the pieces, and after a time his hand, like a faithful guardian, never left them. Soon even this did not content him; he wished to look at them, opened his purse, and handled them.

And thus it happened that the two gold pieces fell, rolled madly, escaped his eyes which darted in pursuit, and disappeared.

Harpagonnet, without budging, his feet glued to the spot, stooped and searched. He trembled and perspired, sick with anguish. He sifted the sand like a dish of beans. He would thus have turned up the Earth.

When he found the first coin, his heart beat less rapidly. He found the second, and his heart was silent. He counted them, sounded them. He had them both again, this one, that one. He put them back into his purse, drew the strings as if to strangle it, and breathed.

Then he did not rise.

The spot was a pleasant one.

And again raking the sand with his fingers, Harpagonnet began to hunt for other gold pieces.

The Bottom of the Sea.

I dived; the dreamy light allured me on
To depths where shadowy wrecks loomed with their dead,
Whose ribs the lazy fishes lie upon,
Whose fleshless hands grasp gold and rubies red.

The waves washed golden dust into my eyes,
Which fevered me with longing and surprise;
I saw the skeletons in ghastly strife
For gold; their empty skulls grinned: "This is life."

Miriam Daniell.

An Idle Tale.

A dragon held in bonds a "ladie brighte,"
Whose tears awoke no pity in his heart.
Her life he sucked, till Arthur's nervy knight
Him slew, for all his scales and damnèd art.

An idle tale that haunts me when I pass
By human rat-holes where the gaunt serfs mass;
What knight is there on dauntless purpose bent
To free the prisoned souls from monstrous Rent?

Miriam Daniell.

Liberty.

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel."—PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

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The Temptations of Politics.

What attitude Anarchists should maintain toward politicians and parties who seem to be growing or groping in the Anarchistic direction is mainly a question of emphasis, — a question whether it is better to lay chief stress on the educational tendency which such publicity promotes and put out of sight the danger of disaster from the execution of a misguided or possibly insincere policy, or to spend our strength (of which unhappily we have none to spare) in sounding a note of serious warning regarding the possible ulterior results of an agitation the present useful influence of which we content ourselves with jubilantly hailing. The tone of Mr. Yarros's paragraphs upon this question indicates a disposition toward the former attitude; I decidedly prefer the latter. This difference is not one of those which cannot be exhibited in a journal's editorial columns without making them ridiculous by inconsistency; nevertheless the elaboration of Mr. Yarros's view makes it necessary for me to assert and reassert my own.

Therefore I point out once more that Anarchists cannot derive unmixed satisfaction, under present circumstances, from the fact that never did the cause of free money receive so much support as now." They have to remember that such partially intelligent support as is given it by the most advanced members of the Democratic party represents after all but a fraction of the party, and probably a small fraction at that; that, though this fraction succeeded in getting the party to commit itself unequivocally to free banking without realizing what it was doing, it probably could not, if a new national platform could now be adopted, secure the insertion of a free banking plank; that the "rubbish" now put forth in campaign documents and in State platforms in explanation and modification of the plank which the party as a whole now wishes it were well rid of is not considered to be rubbish by the party or even by the "free banking" fraction, but only by a minute fraction of that fraction; that, when the question comes to a vote first in Congress and then in the State legislatures, the controlling strength of the party will be thrown to make this "rubbish" reality; and that then it will be seen too late that the bold plank in the national platform together with the discussion growing out of it, instead of "yielding a handsome net profit to the interests of genuine reform," have given such reform a more serious set-back than it could have received in almost any other way.

Politics has its temptations, not only for those within its ranks, but for those outside as well. When a politician champions a cause, even those who have always maintained that the cause could be won only non-politically ache in their glad surprise to give him their applause and even their support, forgetting for the moment that his fatal hand must ultimately blast the hope that they cherish. Stephen Foster, the Abolitionist, who was also a non-resistant from conscientious scruples against the use of force, would not help to rescue a fugitive slave from the hands of the authorities, but would use all his lung-power (and he had a great deal of it) in urging all those who did not share his scruples to engage in a pitched battle with the marshals for the possession of the slave. Of course this showed to any sensible person that Stephen Foster's belief in non-resistance was only skin-deep. I hope the Anarchist's disbelief in politics, better grounded in reason than Stephen Foster's superstitious disbelief in resistance, also sinks deeper into his personality. If so, he will not only eschew politics himself, but he will be careful not to do or say aught to encourage others to political action or to entertain hopes therefrom.

T.

Corollaries.

— Whether the present general discussion of the currency question will bear fruit in the shape of immediate palpable reformatory results is a question upon which opinions probably differ; but there is no disputing the fact that a great amount of truth is being disclosed, and that much light is being reflected on some of the most fundamental problems of social economy. The best things, it is true, are said tacitly and incidentally rather than openly and in pursuance of deliberate purpose; still, provided needed information is conveyed and interesting facts supplied to those who know how to utilize them, it would be idle to object to the instruments and methods chosen by those who build better than they know. Never was the outlook for free banking brighter than now; never did the cause of free money receive so much support as now. Let the practical politician talk "rubbish" to his heart's content; let him continue to meet Republican lies and malicious misrepresentations with hypocritical denials and absurd asseverations; the discussion cannot fail to yield a handsome net profit to the interests of genuine reform. Unless the people are growing more and more dense and simple, they will decline to accept stump currency at face value, and will distinguish between "war measures" and declarations not dictated by the exigencies of the campaign. The forced and inadvertent admissions are of far greater weight than the freely and glibly delivered statements; the lines that are plainly written may be safely neglected for what is found between them.

— Some of the crystallized results of the current discussions I have already dwelt on; let us now advert to some fresh results. Referring to Sherman's proposition that the money of the country shall consist of government notes together with coin, the New York "Times" asserts that in practice this can mean nothing else than fiatism, Greenbackism, Congressional blundering, and experimentation. Of the two conditions which the Senator seeks to attach to the issue of paper money, — that the notes shall be always redeemable in coin, and that the coin of silver and gold shall be of equal intrinsic and market value, — the paper says: "As a mere matter of fact, both these conditions *never* have been fulfilled." Never have been fulfilled! Then what sort of currency have we been extolling? Where is that absolutely indispensable gold basis, without which circulation is impossible and unthinkable? If we never have had a gold basis, what is the sense of pretending that it exists and must continue to exist? Why not courageously and intelligently face the fact that a gold basis is impossible and unnecessary, and set about supplying a real basis of some kind?

— While the New York "Evening Post" is inclined to favor the repeal of the tax on State bank notes, and while it is to be credited with doing most excellent work in exposing Republican hypocrisy and lashing Republican humbug and ignorance, it has so far successfully evaded the real financial question of the day and failed to provide a positive statement of its position with reference to the needed reform in the currency. With the fringe of the issue it is playing very artistically, but luxury is not *much* more satisfactory than a stone in a case like the present, when the cry is for bread, for something essential and fundamental. From vague hints and indirect allusions, it is to be inferred that the "Post" still adheres to the reactionary view that there can be no such thing as a real scarcity of circulation under a gold basis. Thus, in ridiculing the demand of the farmers for more money, it says: "What the Western and Southern farmers really need is not more currency, but more collateral." But this is begging the question. No man, whether farmer, manufacturer, or merchant, is satisfied with the amount of "collateral" he can call his own; everybody strives incessantly to obtain more and more of it; the only pertinent ques-

tion is as to whether men having *some* collateral are not crippled, thwarted, impeded in legitimate activities by artificial scarcity of circulating media due to monopoly and insistence on an impossible and utterly discredited "gold basis." I am encouraged to find that this point is perceived and brought out by the Atlanta "Constitution" in a criticism upon the "Post's" remarks just quoted. "Under the present system," it says, "our business men in many sections and our farmers in all sections cannot use their credit as collateral, although credit has been employed as collateral since men have reposed confidence in each other. All that our people ask is to be permitted to employ their credit in furnishing themselves with an adequate supply of circulation to carry on their business, to move their crops, and to expand and renew their industrial enterprises. If their credit is not good, nobody but themselves will be hurt by it. They simply ask that they shall have restored to them, by the repeal of the prohibitory tax on State banks, their constitutional right to issue promissory notes when they combine with each other for that and other purposes." The "Constitution's" words should be attentively read; there is peculiar significance in them. They indicate a comprehension of mutualism in banking, while the notion of rigid State regulation and monopoly limited by State rather than national geography is wholly foreign to them.

— It is worth while to record that Edward Atkinson is another prominent Massachusetts Democrat who is more progressive than the builders of the State Democratic platform dared to be. In a letter to the Boston "Herald," he defends the demand of the Democratic national platform for the repeal of the tax on State bank circulation, and accepts the proposition in its simplest and most direct form. As the "Herald" editorially summarizes Mr. Atkinson's statement, he believes in "entirely removing national supervision and permitting the banks to establish themselves under the laws of supply and demand, and in accordance with enlightened business and public needs." The following from Mr. Atkinson deserves preserving:

> It is true that bad money or depreciated money, when forced into circulation by an act of legal tender, drives true money or good money out of circulation; but it is equally true that good money of full value, whether legal tender or not, drives bad money out of circulation when that money is not forced upon an unwilling people by an act of legal tender. Therefore it follows that, if, after the remission of the tax on State bank notes, the States did not legislate wisely for the protection of those who were to be allowed to issue State bank notes, and did not assure their redemption, then the banks could not put their notes in circulation. They would be distrusted and refused; or, if paid out, they would be so quickly presented for redemption, under the present conditions of trade, that there would be no profit even in attempting to put them out. It follows that, if there is to be any remedy for our present difficulties, an adequate, elastic, and adjustable note circulation must be devised, and the first step toward a right solution of the problems must of necessity be the repeal of the tax upon the circulation of State bank notes.

Of course I am not oblivious of the fact that neither Mr. Atkinson nor any other spokesman of the radical wing of Democracy has yet explicitly repudiated the "gold-basis" superstition; but politics is politics, and human nature is human nature. Even if the progressive Democrats thoroughly comprehended and fully espoused the cause of genuine free money, we could not expect them to sacrifice their chances of victory and political prospects by committing themselves to positions which Republican frauds and ignoramuses would hail with wild enthusiasm and convert into campaign capital: as it is, I am not quite sure that these progressists really possess clear opinions on the deeper questions involved in the discussion. There is more than a touch of chaos about everything they put forth, and they seem to be groping in comparative darkness. That their emergence from orthodoxy should be a very slow and uneven process is not surprising. The campaign will prove a truly educational one if it educates the educators.

There are not many philosophers in the ranks of the "People's Party" [no reflection on Mr. J. W. Sullivan, who, I understand, supports the People's Party, is intended, he being excluded from my criticism by its very terms, as will appear below]; but this, it seems, is a source of strength rather than weakness. There *are* things in which any attempt at either analysis or synthesis is pregnant with disastrous consequences, and the system of the People's Party is one of these things. As long as it is not touched, breathed, or even looked at intently, it is safe and formidable enough; one look, even of admiration, is sufficient to cause its collapse. That this is absolutely true must have been vividly present to the mind of the philosopher who edits the Omaha "Tocsin," when he labored and brought forth the article on "The Standard of Right and Wrong." He winds up by assuring us that "a vote for Weaver and Field is a vote for justice," while he starts out by affirming that the terms right and wrong are purely social or political and spring from the principle of equal liberty as stated in the famous Spencerian formula. That a labor editor should have heard of equal liberty in the scientific sense is extraordinary, even miraculous; therefore no one can expect *understanding* of the principle from such a quarter. Those who understand equal liberty know of course that the People's Party has the distinction of being the most reckless opponent of that principle in the entire political field. Even the contemptible Republican party is far superior to it when judged by the standard of respect for individual liberty. Yet we are urged to vote for Weaver and Field by reason of our belief in equal liberty! Fortunately for his cause, the editorial philosopher omitted to justify his conclusion by the introduction of a minor premise. He tells us that equal liberty is the object to strive for, and he also tells us that a vote for Weaver is a vote for justice or equal liberty; but he does not prove the legitimacy of his conclusion by establishing that Weaver's platform is throughout consonant with equal liberty. Really, reflect on the result of an effort to square the People's Party demands with the law of equal freedom! Still, I cannot abide by the conclusion that the editor of the "Tocsin" imagines that he can convince us of the propriety of voting for Weaver without first proving that Weaver stands for equal freedom; I prefer to think that he refrained from attempting such a demonstration because he realized the danger of "monkeying" with his platform. Bellamy is wiser: he knows that equal liberty and nationalism will not mix or even coexist, and accordingly he seeks to discredit the "first principle" by charges of arbitrariness, unsoundness, and meaninglessness. He advertises a pamphlet which, he alleges, completely disposes of the Spencerian principle and formula, showing it to be a tissue of assumptions, self-contradictions, and palpable absurdities. I call the attention of the People's Party to the pamphlet. I have read it, and can conscientiously recommend it to them; the arguments are strong and conclusive — to the mind of the average Nationalist or Populite. I hope to discuss the pamphlet in Liberty and justify these remarks.

V. Y.

The Look Over the Prairie.

[Maurice Barrès in Gil Blas.]

Bayreuth, August, 1892.

In this heroic "Parsifal," what compelled our tears was not the suffering of Amfortas, his cry and his emaciated hands, with which he presses his poor wounded heart; nor was it the ardor of Kundry, who, to seduce Parsifal, mingles with her tears of a half-clad woman the memory of a mother who died of grief. "My love offers you, O bitter joy, your mother's last farewell in the ardor of the first kiss!" Disturbing intoxication in which remorse is confounded with desire. With her soft gesture does Kundry wipe away tears, does she caress? It rendered us quite breathless. And yet it was not this that melted our heart.

But it was the fall of the flowers when Klingsor's empire and the world of vain appearances crumbles. How sad and beautiful was this rain with which the entire soil seemed perfumed and blighted! It was like making a litter of all that is best in so many fine and elegant beings.

There you are, roses, whose leaves prevented the young Sybarite from sleeping, heavy sacred lotus which intoxicated the rough soldier between the breasts and in the hair of Egypt's queen, iris of the pools and marshes which the young Ophelia stripped, and you, fresh hydrangeas! Imaginary beauties, how deeply we were moved when Parsifal broke your charm! And yet we found the strength to go farther.

Kundry, with her hair, wiped the feet of Parsifal, and her heart, which she voluntarily humiliates, evoked the Magdalen, of whom all we Christian children were so madly amorous when we began our study of the catechism.

Sublime traits which made us pale with pleasure, but to the orchestra, to the heroes, to the poet, we said: "Lavish your genius! forward our heart! we can stand more pleasure still."

Then Kundry, going to the rear of the scene, leaned over the fence and in silence contemplated the prairie.

Immortal moment, profit which cannot be lost, supreme point in which all our voluptuous emotion is dissipated that we may be touched with the sublime.

Whence this peace that brings divine contentment to your heart, Kundry?

Across the centuries some heroes have already felt it and distributed it to humanity as you distribute it to us.

It is the satisfaction of Socrates in his prison and of Him who rose in the Garden of Olives.

During their silence upon what did these two meditate? Socrates, for a long time, contemplated Athens; he had judged it unbecoming in a citizen to escape the laws, even though unjust; he sacrificed himself to the city. Those who opened the eyes of Jesus saw them raised toward heaven; he invoked his Father and sacrificed himself to the divine will.

But you, what have you seen over the prairie, look of Kundry? Wild flowers, simple people who follow nature.

In this prairie we see neither the mystic olive-tree of the religions nor the olive-tree of the legists, the symbol of Minerva. Neither a city nor a God to impose their laws upon us. Kundry listens only to her instinct. "A pure simpleton who follows his heart," such is the essential phrase of Parsifal.

This prairie, in which nothing of human cultivation grows, is the *tabula rasa* of the philosophers. Wagner throws off all the garments, all the formulas, with which civilized man is covered, loaded, deformed. He has recourse once more to the beautiful primitive human being, in whom life was a powerful sap. Ah! life, it then bore each on toward his perfection. Man did not

resist it. Each of his actions was the immediate flowering of the impulses of his heart.

The philosopher of Bayreuth glorifies natural impulse, the force that makes us act even before we have had time to criticise. He exalts the proud creature superior to all formulas, submitting to no law, but finding his law within himself.

By his sacrifice Socrates founds the [illegible] the City. Jesus the laws of God.

What do Kundry, Tannhauser, Tristan, all these heroes of Wagner, found? The laws of the Individual.

There is no other law than that which we carry within ourselves. To guide ourselves in the direction of perfection it is not necessary to conform to the rules of the City, to the rules of Religion. A citizen? A devotee? Not at all. To be an individual, — that is the teaching of Wagner.

But let no one mistake. This is not a doctrine of easy enjoyments. The cultivation of the Ego, like the cults of God and of the City, requires sacrifices.

We should not subordinate our own nature to any other. We should not content our aspirations with any unworthy object.

It is the suffering of Amfortas to have been satisfied with a woman who was not worthy to be loved. This too is the wrong of the Knight, Henri Tannhauser, on Venusberg; he attains perfection when he loves Elizabeth, because she alone was capable of contenting the quality of love for which he was born.

The crime of Kundry also lies in the contradiction of her Ego. She, born for pity, has, through pride, through false shame perhaps, sneered at the passage of the poor sufferer climbing Calvary; in this she accepted her fellow-citizens' way of looking at things; she will be cursed until she has satisfied her real nature, which is to humiliate herself through love.

And Wagner himself, that ungovernable individualist, was he — as the enemies of our religion of the Ego would like to prove — a voluptuary incapable of sacrifice? Read his biography and see.

He never permitted his inner self to swerve from its path. To remain faithful thereto he sacrificed every desire for immediate enjoyment, since these positive enjoyments of life he could acquire only by submitting his essential faculties, his artistic instincts, to deforming requirements, — to the public taste, to the sentiment of the majority.

Wagner turned away with disgust from the *century*, as the mystics say. Not that he was a mystic, but his desire was such that he could find no satisfaction in the mediocrity of realities. And he had the nobility (unlike Amfortas) not to wish this diminution of his ideal, for that would have caused him a suffering which would have poisoned his life.

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Let us go to Wahnfried to honor, over Wagner's grave, the presentiments of a new ethic.

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